

KIRTLAND CUTTER: Architect in the Land of Promise. By Henry Matthews. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998. 448 pp. \$60.00.) Reviewed by Louise H. Ivers.

Henry Matthews' book about Kirtland Cutter gives insight into the work of a prominent western architect whose career has been previously neglected by historians. According to the author, "One major aim of this monograph is to establish him as a western architect whose contribution should not be overlooked by those studying American architecture as a whole." (p. 4) Certainly Matthews' research proves that Cutter's work, although not avant-garde, fits directly into the mainstream of American design during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His buildings are derivative of period styles, similar to those of Myron Hunt, whose important role in southern California has already been defined by an exhibition and illustrated catalogue of his structures. In one of Cutter's few written statements he revealed his philosophy of architecture: "Modern Domestic architecture has sought to assemble the ideals of every age and Nation, and adapt them to the enormously expanded tastes and requirements of modern civilization. . . . From the traditions and customs of all ages, we have claimed the best." (p. 112)

Cutter, like Hunt, designed houses, hotels, and a college campus. He was a pioneer in the Mission Revival style when he built the W. J. C. Wakefield house in 1897-98 in Spokane, Washington, probably the first one in this mode in the state. He modified and simplified the concepts of this type of architecture when he moved to Long Beach, California in 1923 and began designing homes in the new Palos Verdes development in what became known as the Mediterranean or California style. While Spanish mission facades and colonnades inspired the earlier buildings, Monterey houses of the Mexican period influenced the latter ones.

Henry Matthews' well-documented book is the result of a tremendous amount of archival research. It is organized chronologically and follows Kirtland Cutter's career in various periods and places. He was born in 1860 near Cleveland, Ohio and studied painting and drawing at the Art Students League in New York City. By 1882 he was in Germany with his family and he remained in Europe until 1886. At this time he was impressed by German medieval half-timbered houses with steep gables and picturesque massing, Swiss chalets, and Tuscan farmhouses. These building types remained his primary inspiration throughout his career.

In October 1886, Cutter moved to Spokane, where his uncle was a partner in a bank. Although he had no formal training in the field, he decided to become an architect. His first houses resembled Swiss chalets and he even named his own home "Chalet Hohenstein." Then he began designing Tudor half-timbered and Shingle Style asymmetrical, rambling mansions for Spokane's elite. Matthews states that Cutter's career in Spokane in the 1880s and 1890s paralleled that of Ernest Coxhead in the Bay area. The author compares Kirtland Cutter's early designs to illustrations in well-known periodicals of the period, such as *American Architect and Building News*, and to pictures of historic structures in books he owned, such as *Renaissance Architecture and Ornament in Spain*. Cutter was a western architect typical of this period who consulted published sources for the details of his buildings. His F. Lewis Clark Gate House of 1889 has walls of rusticated masonry and a massive arch similar to those of Henry Hobson Richardson's Ames Gate Lodge in North Easton, Massachusetts of 1880, which was depicted in *American Architect and Building News* in 1885. A number of his homes in Spokane include basalt boulders which are native to the area. However, as Matthews says, Cutter did not copy other architects' designs, but rather offered his own interpretation of them.

The architect was commissioned to design the Idaho Building for the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. He created a wonderful, rustic log chalet that set the tone for his later camps

and hotels in national parks, such as the Lake McDonald Lodge in Glacier Park, Montana of 1912-13. The lobby has tree trunk supports which retain their bark and staircases with gnarled newel posts.

On the other hand, Kirtland Cutter also designed the Patrick Clark house in Spokane in 1897-98 as an exotic Moorish fantasy. The Davenport Hotel, also in Spokane, of 1912 has extravagantly decorated public rooms in various period styles. Both the Sherwood Building of 1915-16 and the Chronicle Building of 1916-24 in Spokane are Gothic Revival business blocks with pointed arches and finials. According to Matthews, "The two extremes of the rustic picturesque and exotic extravagance, both of which fascinated Cutter, represent polarized directions." (p. 6) Apparently Cutter tailored each building to the client's taste and "the historicism in Cutter's architecture was an inevitable response to the life of his era." (p. 5)

Kirtland Cutter remained a romantic throughout his career and even his classical designs, such as the Louis Anderson house in Walla Walla, Washington of 1902-03, have rambling, asymmetrical plans. Cutter's California houses in Palos Verdes, Long Beach, Newport Beach, San Marino, and Beverly Hills, the last ones of his career, continued his flair for romanticism. A drawing for Lunada Bay Plaza in Palos Verdes displays picturesqueness in its use of variously shaped and detailed buildings and towers. Unified by an arcaded walkway around the entire plaza, each store has a different elevation to avoid monotony and give the effect of a town square with structures from many eras.

Cutter's first project in California was for the Hotel Playa del Rey and associated buildings in 1902, but these were never constructed. In 1913 he built the W. H. Cowles house in Santa Barbara. The facade was reconstructed after the 1925 earthquake with two red tile roofed towers facing the ocean in the Mediterranean style. But it was not until the architect lost his home and all of its contents in 1922 and his subsequent move to Long Beach in 1923 that he really immersed himself in the California style. A former associate employed by Olmsted Brothers, who planned the landscaping for Palos Verdes, encouraged him to open an office in Long Beach and Cutter was named "consulting architect for the new city of Palos Verdes." (p. 327) All designs for buildings in Palos Verdes had to be submitted to an Art Jury before they could be implemented and in certain areas only Mediterranean style structures were allowed (in fact, Mediterranean was always preferred). Cutter's houses in Long Beach, with the exception of the J. R. Jimmerson residence designed as an English cottage, were also asymmetrical, simplified Mediterranean creations. The Abraham Lincoln School of 1934 and the campus plan for Long Beach City College have a Mediterranean flavor too. Several buildings were completed at the College before Cutter's death in 1939.

In his book, Henry Matthews places the architect in the context of his era and location and demonstrates to the reader how Kirtland Cutter was not only typical of his time, but also an innovator of designs in the prevalent historical styles. The author introduces significant events of the period in each chapter, as well as the social setting, to provide necessary background materials to the reader. He follows these with discussions of individual clients' careers and tastes and analyses of the buildings' construction, stylistic elements, and interior details. *Kirtland Cutter, Architect in the Land of Promise* is a scholarly book written in a way that engages the reader's attention and provides him/her with a tremendous amount of information. Cutter is revealed as a major architect of the romantic vision in western America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His buildings have wonderful details, both on their exteriors and in period rooms inside. He was a champion of rustic structures of rough rocks and logs that naturally fitted into their surroundings. He was also an early designer in the Mission Revival style which led to his later Mediterranean/Monterey influenced houses in California. These were notable not only for their unity of design, but also for complementing the

local landscape. They were excellent examples of the major movement toward a Californian style in the 1920s and 1930s.

Dr. Ivers, who teaches art history at California State University, Dominguez Hills, has a special interest in architecture and has contributed to this quarterly an article on Long Beach architect Cecil Schilling (Winter 1997).